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National Intelligence Bulletin

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USSR-CHINA

Moscow has reacted cautiously to China's decision on Saturday to release the three Soviet helicopter crewmen. Soviet media have carried only brief factual reports of the release and the arrival of the crew in Moscow. The reports do not convey the impression that the Chinese have done anything dramatic, but the overall number of negative items on China has dropped off.

Soviet embassy officials in Peking, however, are obviously pleased about the release, professing to see in it a major conciliatory gesture. The Soviets have told US officials that they were surprised by the Chinese action and were particularly struck by what they saw as an apologetic tone in the announcement.

Assuming the Soviets were indeed taken by surprise, they will probably now probe for Chinese flexibility on the more substantive issues that divide the two countries. This could involve a comparable gesture by Moscow.

Soviet officials in Peking are already discounting the importance of Moscow's revelation two weeks ago that China holds three additional Soviets who allegedly "inadvertently" strayed across the border. They maintain—unlike Soviet officials in Moscow—that the three may in fact have been defectors.

The Soviets' chief negotiator at the border talks, who was brought home last May, could be sent back to Peking. Moscow could make some concession that would permit the annual river navigation talks to get under way. No talks were held in 1975—for the first time in 20 years—because Peking demanded prior agreement on inclusion of territorial questions on the agenda.

East European diplomats in Peking are speculating that China timed the release of the airmen to influence the Soviet party congress that is set to open in February. They conjecture that Peking hopes to forestall any move toward a harder line policy toward China.

This reasoning greatly exaggerates the degree of support for a more bellicose China policy within Kremlin councils, but the Soviet leadership in the past has made an effort to avoid appearing the intransigent partner to the dispute. Prior to the last congress, in 1971, Moscow made a new offer on the border issue, a non-use-of-force proposal, and an appeal for consultations on Indochina.

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USSR-TURKEY

Soviet Premier Kosygin's good-will visit to Turkey was short on substance, but both sides used it to suggest an improvement in the atmosphere between Moscow and Ankara.

In the communique issued at the end of the visit, the USSR and Turkey said they intend to prepare a "political document" on friendly relations and cooperation. This appears to be an attempt by the Turks to sidestep Moscow's oft-made proposal for a treaty of friendship and cooperation. It may involve no more than a reiteration of the declaration of principles the two sides signed during Soviet President Podgorny's visit in 1972.

The new document is to be signed at a high-level meeting in the near future. This suggests that Turkish Prime Minister Demirel will pick up Kosygin's invitation to visit Moscow next year.

Moscow and Ankara appear to have prevented the Cyprus issue from becoming a bone of contention. They reiterated their positions, and the opaque language of the communique succeeded in concealing their differences.

In addition to his discussions with top government leaders, Kosygin met with opposition leader Bulent Ecevit, and seemed to devote particular attention to him at a dinner given by Demirel. The Soviets, who commented favorably on Ecevit's policies while he was in office, undoubtedly calculate that the former prime minister has a good chance to return to power. [REDACTED]

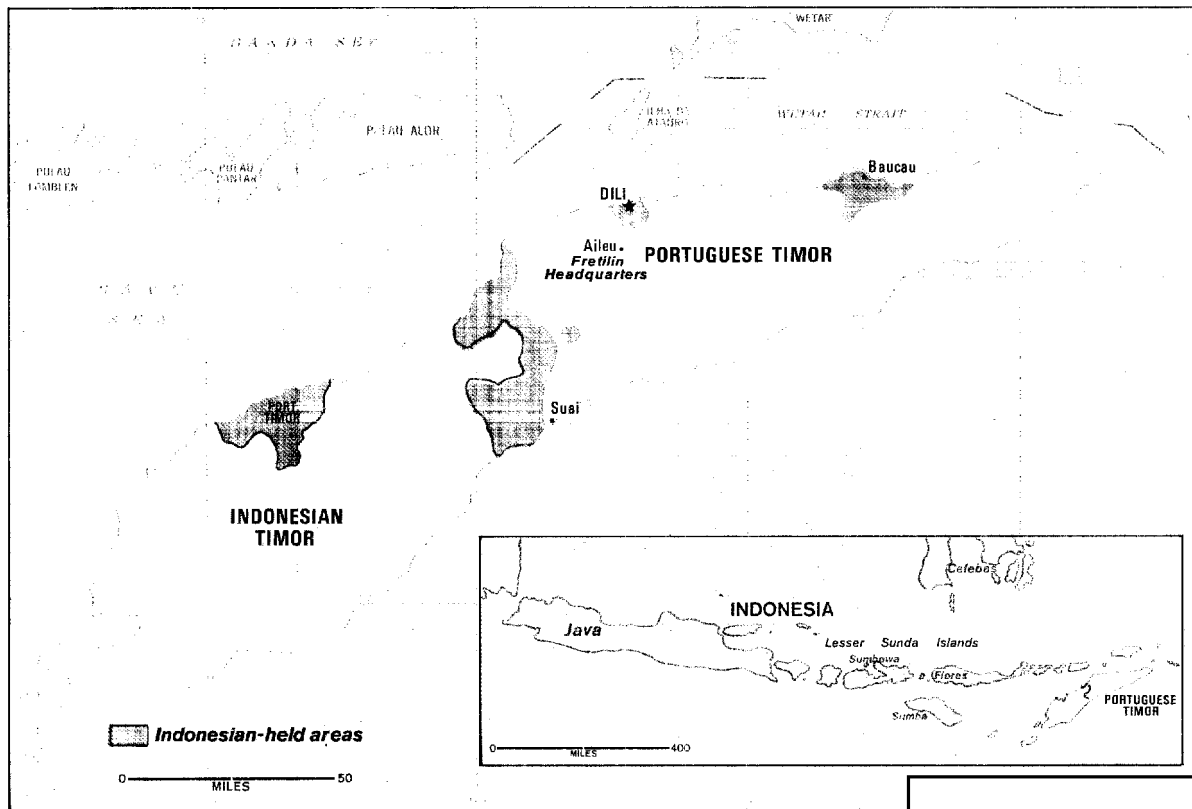
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INDIA

A national convention of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's Congress Party unanimously approved yesterday a resolution she endorsed calling for an indefinite extension of the six-month-old state of emergency and a year's postponement of the parliamentary elections that were due next March.

The need for the move was attributed to unspecified internal and external "forces of destabilization" that were said to be continuing to threaten the Indian political system. As long as the emergency remains in effect, the present parliament, elected in 1971, can extend its own life for successive one-year periods by a majority vote.

The party's two-thirds majority in parliament ensures quick approval of the extension when the next legislative session begins on January 5. With an excellent fall harvest and inflation at least temporarily under control, the move to delay elections is not expected to meet with serious opposition from the public.

The party resolution also called for a "thorough re-examination" of the Indian constitution to determine whether it is a "living document" that is responsive to "the needs of the people." This proposal suggests that Gandhi may next push for constitutional revisions aimed at permanently strengthening the powers of the executive branch.

In any rewriting of the constitution, the judiciary is likely to be weakened. It has challenged the constitutionality of some of the government's emergency measures and remains the principal obstacle to Gandhi's authoritarian rule.

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BANGLADESH

The troops in Dacca that threatened last week to defy transfer orders unless two exiled officers were allowed to return have sworn on the Koran to obey future orders and adhere to military discipline [redacted] The troops apparently relented after the popular chief of staff, General Zia ur-Rahman, reportedly threatened to resign unless they obeyed orders.

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The government has had trouble reimposing control over the military following a series of mutinies last month, triggered in part by economic grievances. The US embassy in Dacca reports that widespread grumbling continues in the military over the government's failure to redress these grievances.

A government campaign to punish enlisted men who were involved in the disturbances may also have fostered some unhappiness among the troops. The campaign has been halted, or at least temporarily suspended. In addition, Zia could face trouble from the officer corps, where there is said to be some resentment against him. In an apparent effort to strengthen his position, Zia recently forced into retirement General Khalil ur-Rahman, one of the country's highest ranking officers. Rumors are circulating in Dacca that another senior officer may soon be shelved.

Khalil was one of the officers held in Pakistan until after the end of the Bangladesh independence struggle in 1971. His forced retirement could cause resentment among other repatriated officers, some of whom are reportedly dissatisfied with what they see as their failure to be promoted as quickly as those who fought in the 1971 war. [redacted]

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RHODESIA

25X1 Prime Minister Ian Smith and black nationalist faction leader Joshua Nkomo, [redacted] agreed during their talks in Salisbury two weeks ago that each side would establish a committee to draft a new constitution designed to settle the Rhodesian dispute. The two committees are to try to arrive at a joint position by January 5, when they are scheduled to meet in a formal planning session.

Smith and Nkomo reportedly agreed to use the 1961 constitution as the basis for a new one. Nkomo was deeply involved with the British and white Rhodesian leaders in the negotiations that produced that document, which gave black Rhodesians a modest political role.

25X1 [redacted] Smith had argued for using, as the starting point, either the constitution adopted by his white regime when it declared independence unilaterally in 1965 or the amended version, adopted in 1969; both de-emphasized the political and civil rights of blacks. Given this basic difference of perspective, the two committees are likely to find themselves still poles apart on January 5, despite Smith's agreement to use the 1961 constitution. [redacted]

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FOR THE RECORD

EGYPT-FRANCE: Negotiations between Paris and Cairo are almost complete on licensing Egypt to assemble Mirage F-1s, according to [redacted] the US defense attache in Cairo. Egypt will continue to receive deliveries of Mirage III and 5 aircraft. Egypt will assemble more than 300 F-1s for its use and for its partners in the Arab Industrial Organization—Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. The assembly program, which could begin as early as 1976, will probably utilize airframe and engine plants at Cairo's Helwan airfield. The organization has a strong bargaining position for arms purchases and coproduction agreements with the West. The UK and France are competing for contracts, and apparently both will be heavily involved in establishing an arms industry in Egypt. [redacted]

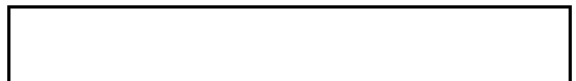
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